

Things for Modern Families to Think About When Finding a Doula

When you are in need of a service, where do you normally look? Start there. Any doula running a legitimate business should be out on the World Wide Web where you can find them easily.

Do they have a website?

Is it up to date? Do they have a blog to answer questions and give you a sense of who they are and how they run their business? Is it easy to navigate and pleasant to look at? Is it professional? Are things spelled correctly? What about grammar? Don't forget, you're interviewing support people to work with you for around a year or more. Are they up for the job?

Do they have good reviews?

Sometimes getting clients with tiny newborns to give feedback on services can be a little tough, so we're not looking for quantity here, but quality. Read the reviews. Do these doulas sound like they are professional, efficient and caring? What's important to you in those reviews?

How do they run their business?

When you contacted them did they get back to you quickly or did it take several days? Why? Sure, we all attend long births sometimes, but what if you had an urgent question or needed them quickly? Do they work with a partner who can get back to you right away? Who will come to your birth if they are at another one? Will it be a stranger? What happens if they get sick, or their kids get sick? Do they have systems in place to make sure they can provide the services they agreed to? Do they have a contract for services? Is the rate, refund policy, overtime compensation and communication policy written out and easy to understand? What about privacy and social media?

What about training?

There are a LOT of people out there (friends, family, friends of friends) who think that birth is super cool (it is) and they want to be a part of it. But there are also a lot of people who think fireworks are cool and they want to learn pyrotechnics. Would you hire them for a display at your next party, or would you leave that to the professionals?

Supporting families during birth involves a lot more than just showing up and holding your hand and telling you you're doing a good job. Professional doulas are constantly reading,

studying, keeping up certifications, gaining new certifications and continuing their education to make sure they are giving you the best possible support, without causing issues with providers.

All trainings are not the same, so ask a little about it. Was it an in person training? How many hours were spent hands on, in a class? What else is required? How long did it take? The ways these questions are answered are way more important than the number of births a doula has attended. Every birth situation is unique, and every family is unique. No doula will ever have seen it all and done it all. Whether they've attended 5 births or 500 births, did their training teach them how to support YOU and YOUR FAMILY, no matter what the situation?

This leads us to some common questions that get asked a lot right now. Let's look at those.

How do you feel about XX provider/birthplace?

This is actually a question your doula should be asking YOU, but only if you've expressed concerns. Maybe they've worked with your provider, maybe they haven't. What you should be looking for here is professionalism. Can your doula work with any provider you've chosen? It is not our job to second guess who you've chosen to take care of you. We can work politely and professionally with any of them. IF and only IF you ask, should we be giving you suggestions to change providers, or opinions about care. We are not medical professionals. This is out of scope.

What types of birth do you support?

Your doula should support any and all types of support EXCEPT for one where a medical professional is not present. This also goes for "**What is your birth philosophy,**" And any other medical "What if" scenarios. Again, we are not medical providers. We do not give medical advice, use dopplers, palpate uteruses, tell you the position of your baby, do vaginal exams or tell you how to get baby into another position, get labor started, stop labor, or anything remotely medical. This is all out of scope, and should be done by your provider, or under the title of monitrice, which is a separate service, with a separate contract, and should be researched carefully.

What's in Your Doula bag? What kinds of things do you do during labor? Do you provide XYZ?

These questions are all throw backs to the days before professional doula training, and are a product of lay people and childbirth educators deciding to attend births without formal training. Childbirth educators teach about all kinds of massage tools and comfort items to bring with you in labor. At some point, this began to translate into doulas providing these items for the clients' comfort. But how many clients have used these items? Have they been correctly sanitized? What if a doula needs to go from one client to another? What if your labor is

progressing quickly and the doula doesn't have the tools? As your childbirth class taught you, these items should be personal to you, and used only on you. You are a unique individual. Your professional doula should be able to provide support and comfort to you using only the tools they bring with them everywhere: their head, heart and hands. What works for you, in your birthing space will not work for every client. Doulas should be well trained in adapting to what is happening in the moment, rather than applying a one size fits all scenario. Their doula bag should carry the things they need to make sure they are at their best possible self for you. (Snacks, money, personal toiletries, etc.)

